

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

ATTITUDES TOWARD A MIDDLE EAST IN CRISIS:
SURVEYS OF ARAB AND JEWISH OPINION IN ISRAEL

Washington, D.C.
Friday, November 30, 2012

PARTICIPANTS:

Introduction and Moderator:

TAMARA COFMAN WITTES
Senior Fellow and Director, Saban Center for
Middle East Policy
The Brookings Institution

Featured Speaker:

SHIBLEY TELHAMI
Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development
University of Maryland
Nonresident Senior Fellow, the Brookings
Institution

Discussant:

DANA WEISS
Moderator, Channel 2 News' "Meet the Press"
(Israel)

* * * * *

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. WITTES: Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. I apologize for the slight delay while we worked out a few technical issues so that we can show you these slides. Thank you so much for joining us for another in our series of launches of public opinion polls by our colleague Nonresident Senior Fellow in the Saban Center Shibley Telhami who is also of course the Anwar Sadat Professor at the University of Maryland. This poll which is a poll of Israeli public opinion could not be better timed I think to give us some insight in the wake of truly head-spinning developments in the region and indeed here at home. We are going to be looking at data that was gathered just over the last week, in other words, in the wake of the American presidential elections, in the wake of the announcement of new Israeli elections and a lot of jockeying by Israeli politicians of the left, right and center, and also data that reflects the Gaza crisis and its tentative cease-fire resolution. And we're looking at this data of course the morning after the U.N. General Assembly voted to recognize Palestine as a nonmember state. This is like all polls a snapshot of a rapidly moving picture, but I think it's one that comes at a crucial time as both the United States, the government of Israel and governments around the world think about where we go next and as Israelis contemplate the choices they face on January 22 and think about where they would like to go next. I'd like to note as well that we're launching this poll on the morning before the Saban Center convenes its annual high-level Saban Forum: U.S.-Israeli Strategic Dialogue and we're very grateful to Shibley for making it possible to have this public event alongside that high-level dialogue.

I'm going to briefly introduce Shibley whom I think many of you know well, and along with Shibley we have as a commentator on this public opinion data Dana

Weiss who is the moderator of I think the biggest program on Channel 2, maybe the biggest program on Israeli TV, "Meet the Press" and who has kindly joined us this morning and come to Washington for our strategic dialogue. Dana is not only an accomplished journalist and accomplished interviewer, but also someone with a lot of deep insight into the Israeli political and legal system that she's practiced throughout her career and we're really grateful that she can be here to provide some insight from the Israeli side on this poll.

The other thing I should mention is that Shibley has very graciously allowed me to give you a little preview of something that he's been working on for quite a while that will not be formally released until January but that I wanted to highlight for all of you now because I think you can preorder it on Amazon, and that is this fantastic edited volume, "The Peace Puzzle: America's Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace 1989 to 2011." I'm sorry. It's not an edited volume, it's a co-authored volume, and this is the result of a tremendous amount of research, primary interviews with key players across the history of the modern Arab-Israeli peace process and I have no doubt it's going to be a definitive work, so, Shibley, congratulations and please look for this on Amazon or in bookstores in January. With that, Shibley, I'd like to ask you to give us your presentation. Thank you.

MR. TELHAMI: Good morning. It's always good to be here and before I give you the results let me just to give you a little background on this, as you know, I do polls in the Arab world and in Israel annually and this particular one we timed it to come after the American elections to see how Israelis now see the prospects of U.S.-Israeli relations and also the perspective on major issues like Arab-Israeli issues and the issue of Iran. But as in fact we set out to go into the field just as the Gaza escalation took

place, we waited until the last day of the fighting and we then added some questions that pertain specifically to the escalation so that this is really, really fresh. The first day of polling was last Wednesday which was the day of the cease-fire. We did 150 interviews that day just before the cease-fire went into effect. And then the rest of the roughly 450 were done on Sunday and Monday so that the last day of interviewing was just this past Monday and we didn't get the results until Tuesday. You can imagine how we scrambled to analyze and get the results out, and for that I really have to thank my partners. This poll is co-sponsored by the Sadat Chair at the University of Maryland and the Program for International Policy Attitudes with my colleague Steve Coll. The staff has been extremely superb with Evan Lewis, Claire Ramsey, Abe Madoff who worked very hard to analyze and get this stuff in place. This was fielded by the Da Hoff Institute in Israel. It's a phone interview of 600, 510 Jews and 90 Arabs, so it's a national survey. For reasons of comparison particularly with surveys that we've done among Jewish-Israelis, we break it down into Jewish and non-Jewish. The reason we don't have the Arab sample specifically is that I conduct a fuller poll among Arabs. They are usually face to face. I'll be doing one in the spring among 500 Arabs. And 90 is not enough statistically to compare with the full sample, so we use it as part of the national sample to get a representative national sample.

With that in mind I will go through it very quickly. Remember by the way that I'm not going to go over every finding that we have in the poll. We have posted all the results. You cloud find them in fact as of this minute on Brookings.edu, the Sadat website at the University of Maryland or the pipa.org website. Those are all there for you

to follow-up with the actual details of the questions and more information and if you have any questions about methodology as well, feel free to ask.

Let's start with the Gaza war since this is obviously something fresh. Do you believe that the fighting between Israel and the Palestinian groups in Gaza will end for good only when there is a political final status agreement, will only end through a major Israeli military campaign, will end if Israel reoccupies Gaza or will not end? Look at the results and I think there is a really big story to be told here. It seems straightforward but it's much more complicated than that because when you look at it, there is not a huge difference between the overall and Jewish only here so that it doesn't matter what part you're looking at, but look at the overall for now. Only 15 percent of Israelis think that this would end by a more extreme military operation. Only 12 percent think this would end if you reoccupy Gaza. Nobody really thinks there's a military solution to this and that's clear. But the other thing that is clear for those who want to argue that it will end only through peaceful means and final settlement, only 29 percent of Israelis overall think this would end with a final settlement agreement so that you have 40 percent saying it will not end, it's kind of a resignation that this is going to happen no matter what and essentially the feeling that you have to do this over and over again. That's worth a discussion because I think that's a very probably telling picture of where the public is on this one.

Who in your opinion won the combat in the Gaza Strip? Remember that this is not about who won politically. It's specifically about the fighting, who you think performed better in some ways. It's hard to know how the public interpreted this, but it was very specific to combat and not to political victory. Here again neither side is the largest segment and you only have 45 percent saying neither side, 40 percent say Israel,

11 percent say Hamas. I want to say one thing here. I told you that the first day of polling was Wednesday, the last day of the fighting just before the cease-fire went into effect, there were 156 interviews that day and then 3 days later the rest of it was conducted so that there was a little space after the cease-fire. Overall we didn't see major statistically significant differences between the polling on that day with the rest, but on this issue we did see some move though again not statistically significant but some evidence that more people thought Hamas won 3 days later than they did on Wednesday, still a minority, but there was a larger minority in that sample.

Is Israel in a better position or worse position compared with the period before the escalation? Again look at how divided Israelis are. The largest segment especially among Jewish-Israelis it stayed the same with no change. But still among those who think there was a change, more people think it improved than think it had gotten worse. I think for now you'd have to say, yes, they're divided but with a slight edge to slightly better.

U.S.-Israeli relations. This is a question that is not a popularity question as such because I asked that in the Arab world as well. I say that I'm trying to get at the prism through which people view the world when they answer this question. What is it that's driving them when they answer a question? I ask a similar question in the Arab world and it's been fascinating to see how that varied over time. I've asked that among Israelis for the last 3 years. I could tell you that this is an open question. We don't give them names, they can name anybody they want so that nobody really gets a huge majority. The largest anybody will get will be in the teens generally so that it's not like we have some overwhelming winner of this, but it tells you something about who are the

people who are on the public's mind. I can tell you that in the last 2 years Angela Merkel of Germany was the favored world leader among Israelis, quite a bit more than other leaders getting again in the teens which is kind of an interesting historical fact that you might want to analyze a little bit. Obama hasn't done well. Bill Clinton has done much better historically. Usually Bill Clinton is number two. Look at this year. Among Jewish-Israelis, if you look at the bottom line that is Jewish-Israelis in November 2011, the last poll that we did. We had Merkel at 12 percent, Clinton at 10 percent, Obama at 6 percent, and no one at 32 percent, a large number. But look at this. Obama is now number one on that list. It's not a majority of Israelis but he's favored any other leader. You call it a tie and certainly it is if you take into the margin of error. That's quite a bit shift for Obama and it's again worth discussing in our conversation what happened here with Obama coming particularly after the Gaza war. Certainly he supported Israel during the Gaza war and was seen to have taken a public position in support of Israel and obviously opposed the Palestinian move at the U.N. It's interesting to see that some of the same things that anger our public are the sorts of things that may please the Israeli public, a zero sum game at one level.

How would you describe your views of President Barack Obama of the United States? Again, for this we have history and it's been increasingly positive. Surprisingly, even last November among Jewish-Israelis he had 54 percent of people who said they had a favorable view of him, but there was a huge increase this year, I wouldn't say a huge increase, but a significant increase, from 2011 to 2012. That goes with again identification of Obama as a favored leader.

On American support for Israel, we tried to figure out whether the Israeli public had the perception that American public support is increasing or decreasing on two issues, in general or on security issues specifically. There is no much here to indicate any major shift. Forty percent say it's stayed about the same, 27 percent say it decreased, 30 percent say it increased, roughly the same. But on security issues, thinking about the American public, is it your impression that support for Israel's security needs has increased, decreased or stayed about the same? You can see that 40 percent overall think that American public support for Israel's security needs has increased and you wonder whether that's part of a function of all this rhetoric where even the Israeli government was acknowledging that Obama was being supportive on that issue, certainly Barak, I wonder if that had something to do with it.

Is it your impression that during the American presidential elections Prime Minister Netanyahu supported the Republican candidate, the Democratic candidate or stayed neutral? We know where the American public thinks Netanyahu was. The question is does the Israeli public see the same thing? It's interesting. Yes, they do. Sixty-one percent say that Netanyahu supported Romney. Among Jewish-Israelis it's slightly higher at 64 percent. That's obviously straightforward right here.

In President Obama's second term how do you think the personal relationship between Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Obama will affect American support? Remember that's sort of consequential for Israeli politics, an election. Do they fear that Obama is going to punish them or punish Netanyahu? Is this going to happen? We already saw some results obviously maybe influenced by the position of Obama on the Gaza war and the Palestinian bid at the U.N., but we already saw that the

Israeli public warmed up to him anyway. You can see here too that they don't think it's going to make a difference and even slightly more people think it's going to help the relationship rather than hurt the relationship. There's a lot of confidence about the Israeli-U.S. relationship despite that background and that's fascinating to me and it's worth a discussion. I'd love to hear what Dana has to say about that because I think that's a very complicated issue.

In his second term do you expect the Obama administration's relations with Israel to get warmer, stay about the same or get cooler? Again the majority says stay about the same, but more people say it will get warmer than cooler. The same story.

Let me turn to Iran's nuclear program, obviously a huge issue that is likely to remain on the agenda in the next few months and may become bigger on the agenda for a variety of reasons. On this also we have a track record particularly among Jewish-Israelis where we asked questions at two different times. This is a straightforward question. There is talk of a possible Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. Do you support or oppose the attack? We don't give them any context. We don't give them any information. We don't say with American support or without American support. We leave it to their imagination, that this is the plain choice. You can see that overall 50 percent oppose an attack, 38 percent support an attack. Among Jewish-Israelis it's a little closer. Israeli Jews are clearly very divided, a minor shift from 2011 and remember that the margin of error is plus or minus 4 percent. It hasn't changed since 2011. That's a year of roughly the same breakdown despite the Gaza war, that even in light of the Gaza war there isn't a shift here.

In regard to a possible Israeli military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, what do you think Israel should do, strike without U.S. support, strike only with U.S. support, do not strike? This one where we introduce the U.S. separately. By the way, we don't sequence them one after the other. We separate them in the questionnaire so they have space to reflect on this. What we get here is again no big difference from 2011 or for that matter from February 2012 where we also have the overall difference. We have 43 percent say strike only with U.S. support, 20 percent say strike without it and among Jewish-Israelis only 18 percent say strike without U.S. support. Again note that one-third of Israelis consistently say don't strike, period, with or without U.S. support. That's been there.

The likelihood of Iranian nuclear weapons. This is question obviously about the Israeli public's assessment of whether Iran is likely to acquire nuclear weapons anyway no matter what you do and here is what we have. Eighty-seven percent of Israelis think that Iran will eventually have nuclear weapons, 87 percent, and among Jewish-Israelis it's even higher at 92 percent who think Iran will eventually have nuclear weapons.

What do you believe the likely outcome would be if Israel strikes Iran? This is in terms of delaying Iran's nuclear program. How long would it delay it or would it accelerate it? Again you can see that the percentage of people who think it would be delayed more than 5 years is a majority, most people think it would be delayed less than 5 years and a good percentage at 11 percent say it would accelerate Iran's nuclear program.

What do you think the U.S. reaction would be if Israel strikes Iran? Here you have only a few people think that the U.S. would punish Israel, 11 percent who say the U.S. is likely to punish Israel, a slight drop from February and 14 percent say it would stay neutral. The largest segment, 46 percent, say that the U.S. would support Israel diplomatically but not militarily. About a quarter or 24 percent say the U.S. would join the war with Iran.

Very quickly on the idea of supporting a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East given verification, it's a series of questions and I invite you to look at them. I'm not going to go through all of them. I invite you to look at the website to see the series that we've done and we've repeated it from last time. This is a bottom-line question whether they support a nuclear weapons free zone that would include Israel and Muslim countries in the Middle East. You have still a majority of Israelis supporting that, 58 percent favor it, 35 percent oppose. It is a slight drop from 2011. In 2011 we had 64 percent say they supported it, this time around 58 percent say that. That's outside the margin of error so that there is a light drop in the number of people. Making a deal with Iran, I'm going to skip that for now. I'm going to move to Syria because I want to turn very quickly to the conversation.

The Syria issue obviously is important for Arabs, it is important for the U.S., it's important internationally and it's certainly important to Israelis. The question is how do they see it. One of the questions that we asked is if the Syrian opposition were to gain power as compared to the Assad regime, do you think this would be better for Israel or worse for Israel? A straightforward question about perception. It's interesting because the number of people who think it would be worse for Israel is larger. It's 42 percent, 30

percent say it would be better for Israel, 11 percent say it wouldn't make a difference. Israelis are pretty divided on this, but more think it would be worse. How would you characterize the current conflict in Syria? This is a question we also ask in the Arab world, do you see it as mostly about ordinary Syrians seeking freedom? Is it mostly about Islamist groups trying to take power? Or is it mostly a civil war among ethnic factions? Here too the Israelis are really divided on this and you can see that. More people say it's people seeking freedom, but if you add the other two groups together it's certainly a big majority, people who think it's either Islamist groups or civil conflict. It's very divided as is the case by the way in much of the Arab world.

On Egypt, which of the following is closer to your view about the impact of the Arab Spring on Israel? This is broad about the Arab Spring. Is it mostly worse or mostly better? A slight majority of Israelis still think it's worse for them, that the Arab Spring has been worse for them. The number of people slightly increased from 2011 among Israeli Jews. How about President Morse's policies toward Israel? Is it as they expected? Is it worse than they expected? Is it better than they expected? Here too the largest segment is about the same particularly among Israeli Jews at 53 percent, and then they're divided about whether it's better or worse for Israel, so roughly the same I would say. The Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. Do they think that it will remain in force in 4 years? It will remain in force but will be modified? Or it will be terminated? This is again a public assessment about fears pertaining to the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty that is obviously an important issue. What you find is the largest segment, 41 percent overall, say that it will remain in force but will be modified. Only 17 percent overall and 16

percent among Jewish-Israelis think that it will be terminated. Thirty-six percent say it will remain in force in its present form. Obviously more people think it will be modified.

I'm going to finally turn to the Palestinian question. Obviously this is a big day after the poll Palestinians succeeded in getting General Assembly support for a nonmember state at the U.N., potentially big, and it opens up the question of negotiations. In fact, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said as he went to the U.N. that once this is approved he's going to launch negotiations almost the next day so that there is some expectation that maybe something would happen on the negotiating front. But what are the prospects of that? Which of the following statements is closer to your view? I'm prepared for a just peace based on the '67 borders. Even if the Arab states and recognize Israel, I still oppose withdrawing from territories occurred in '67. You can see something here that is interesting because the number of people who straightforward say I'm prepared for a just peace based on the '67 borders has declined and we've seen that before particularly among Jewish-Israelis, so look at the last two lines. November 11, 43 percent said that they're prepared for that. In 2012 it's a big drop to 33 percent. It doesn't seem to affect the roughly 30 percent who say even if the Arabs offer us all the peace, we still don't want to withdraw and that's about one-third. It's the middle category that has moved more to the right one can argue. In 2002 Arab countries offered the Arab Peace Initiative, a comprehensive peace deal with Israel based on Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in the '67 war and full peace agreements between Israel and all the Arabs states. If this offer is renewed with support from Egypt's new government, how should the Israeli government react? Do you think it should accept the offer as proposed? Accept the offer as the basis of negotiations? Reject the offer?

As you know, there is an argument about certainly in the peace camp in Israel that if you review the Arab Peace Initiative and you add Egypt as kind of reinvigorating the Israeli Peace Treaty to this that it might sway some people. I'm not sure. You find 46 percent of Israeli Jews say reject it outright. That's nearly half of the Israelis saying reject it outright. You have only 7 percent say accept the offer as proposed and 43 percent say accept the offer as the basis of negotiations. If you want to look at it half-full you could say a slight majority favors either accepting it as is or accepting as a basis for negotiation. Israelis are divided, we all know that, but it's very graphic. The issue here is moving more to the right. That's documented in the data. I'm going to give you a couple more examples of this.

Which of the following statements are closest to your view about the prospects of lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians? It will happen in the next 5 years? It is inevitable but will take more time. I don't believe it will ever happen? Again look at the last two lines for comparison purposes. Among Jewish-Israelis in 2011 we had 49 percent say it will never happen. This year we have 55 percent say it will never happen. Pessimism is increasing. By the way, it's the mirror image of what's happening on the Arab side, we've shown that in the polls that you have an increase of people who say it will never happen because they're pessimistic. But you can this very clearly moving to the right.

Outcome if the two-state solution collapses? There will be a one-state solution. Intense conflict for years to come. The status quo will continue. Or the Palestinians will eventually surrender to Israel power. I give the same options in the Arab world, by the way, and in Arab polls in the Arab world what I find consistently is that the

overwhelming majority say there will be intense conflict for years to come. Very few people say there will be one state and very few people say Palestinians will give power. Some people say the status quo. But the overwhelming majority says it will be intense conflict for years to come. That's what we used to get in Israel in the past. That has shifted over the last couple of years. This is really an interesting story that also needs analysis and, Dana, I would love your reflection on it because if you look at this result, you have people, obviously a large segment, who say intense conflict for years to come, 35 percent. But you have even a slightly bigger segment of the public who say that the status will continue. It's no longer a majority who think it will be conflict for years to come, but the status quo will continue is -- and that status quo you can see first of all in 2011 to 2012 the number of people who say that the status quo will continue to increase from 47 percent to 42 percent and I can tell you that in the previous year from 2010 to 2011 there was also an increase in the number of people who say it will be just the status quo and not intense conflict. Some Israelis are not particularly uncomfortable with the status quo. Obviously the Gaza war is an exception to the rule. It's a little bit less urgent I think in their minds, and I'd love to hear Dana's comments on that.

Obama's mediation in the Middle East, whether the president will be in a better position to help negotiate peace or not, not much change. Fifty-four percent say his ability remains the same. Slightly more people think it will be better than say it will be worse.

A final point on the internal Israeli dynamic and definition of Israeli identity particularly. Which of the following is your most important identity? We tell people that all their identities are important, I do the same thing in the Arab world, but we

try to get to force them to choose in these questions. This is only among Israeli Jews because we ask about Jewish identity. Fifty percent say Jewish identity trumps Israeli identity and that is a significant increase from 2011. I do note however that Israel identity also has increased from 2011 to 2012 so that you have more polarization taking place. That polarization by the way shows up in another question which is about the Jewishness of Israel and its democracy. You can see it's split there. That is, which of the following is closer to your views, the Jewishness of Israel is more important to me than its democracy, both are equally important, the democracy of Israel is more important to me than its Jewishness. You can see where Israelis are. They are obviously divided on this, but if you look at what happened from 2011 to 2012, it went from 27 to 31 percent that the Jewishness of Israel is more important to me, but also that democracy is more important to me went up from 26 percent to 33 percent. The one that diminishes both equally important. So you have a polarization. It's exactly what we're seeing. There is more polarization in Israeli politics. The middle is shrinking. How would you describe the current status of Arabs in Israel? This obviously pertains in some ways to the identity of the state but also in terms of whether they think there is equality, so we give them three options. There is full equality between Arab and Jewish citizens. There is legal equality but institutional and societal discrimination. And it is more like an Apartheid arrangement or relationship so that we have these three options. First of all, we didn't find considerable change from last time among Jewish Israelis particularly given the margin of error plus or minus 4, but overall you can see where it's at. The largest segment, the majority, 55 percent, say there is legal equality but institutional discrimination. Twenty-eight percent say there is full equality. Twelve percent say it's an Apartheid relationship,

but among Jewish Israelis it's only 8 percent so that this is the combination of Arab and Jewish for the 12 percent.

With that I am going to end and invite my colleagues to the stage for a conversation. Thank you very much.

MS. WITTES: While my colleagues are getting settled and putting on their microphones, let me take a minute to express my thanks to the Project on International Policy Attitudes, PIPA, which is in the back. Thank you very, very much. You've been an incredible partner for Shibley and for us in this series of polls and we're delighted to keep working with you.

Dana, Israelis seem divided on a lot of major issues in the region. How to think about Syria or whether to conduct military strikes on Iran. There is one thing they seem to have a much more unified view on which is pessimism about Middle East peace and their relationship with the Palestinians. They're not prepared for peace. They think violence will continue even if there's a final negotiated agreement. What lesson do we draw from this?

MS. WEISS: First of all, thank you so much for having me. It's a privilege and an honor. And thank you, Shibley, for the fascinating data. The first thought in watching these slides and not reading it, I thought Israelis must be crazy because here they are living in a country where they know, they believe, there is not going to be a solution, Gaza is going to keep on throwing rockets on them. It's amazing. The first bomb rocket that hit Tel Aviv I was in the fitting room with my son. He was buying jeans for a bar mitzvah he had to go to. I saw there's a missile on Tel Aviv and I said get me another pair of jeans because it's like -- so this is part of life already also in

Tel Aviv and Rishon. They believe that Iran is going to acquire a nuclear bomb no matter what and they hear their leaders saying that it wants to wipe Israel off the -- so why are they so happy? Because in all the polls that you do in Israel, people say that they love their life and they're very happy. Why aren't they going away? What kind of people are there? You could go for if I were an official government speaker I would say this is Zionism, Zionism was all about doing and doing against -- swimming against the currents. Happily I'm not an official spokesperson.

And I think the reason is because they have become addicted to the status quo and you see that very clearly in your slides. I think the most influential person in the past year is Ehud Barak in that sense. He just got a medal from the Defense Secretary -- for outstanding -- and he's just left us. Dramatically he's just announced that he's quitting. I think we might see him back, but anyway he doesn't want to be -- he doesn't want to go through the --= want to be dragged through the elections to find himself without voters because it's amazing, no one wants to vote for Ehud Barak but they want him as defense minister and they -- he's the best copywriter of our time and he told the Israeli public two things and they take it -- they take his word on it. First of all, he came back in 2000 and he said there is no one to talk to, and from the moment Ehud Barak who was the hope, the new Rabin, the success of Ben-Gurion as he sees himself, stood up and said I was the person who was going to bring you peace and I failed. I tore the mask off the other side and there will -- there is no one to talk to. That has shrunk into the public opinion and has grown throughout the years. And the second thing, he has told the people in Israel that we are a villa in the jungle. It's a tough neighborhood. The Arab Spring has just made it even tougher in Israelis' eyes, but we are a villa. And if

you want, the fact that the Israelis came out of this conflict with the Iron Dome being the hero, for them that is the solution. The status quo can go on because we're smarter, we have better technology, and we have found a way to improve our lives despite the neighborhood. So that is something that is making the urgency -- the feeling of urgency of Israelis, it's lacking in some ways. You could say that the Gaza operation should have been a wake-up call because here we have a right-wing government, dream team right-wing government. We have Lieberman and Netanyahu. You couldn't dream of a right-wing government. They let all these long-range missiles go into the Gaza on their -- it's on their term. It didn't happen before -- missiles could reach Tel Aviv before. But they had 4 years of quiet, so we had an 8 days' operation that ended okay. No one was -- there were only three or four -- six, sorry, casualties on the Israeli side. They don't care about the other side. We had the world stand in an okay manner. We can go on. So I think that is the tragedy, they have become -- Israelis have become addicted to the status quo. They heard Barak saying there is no one to talk to so there is no one to talk to. And they're a villa in a jungle. Who doesn't want to live in a villa?

So I think to start off I think that is -- that -- and I think one more thing. They heard Nesrallah say Israel is a spider web society. Once you attack the citizens and not the soldiers, it will crumble and we will throw rockets on them and we will finish the story. They woke up and they said Nesrallah is in the bunker. That's how -- Barak keeps on saying Nesrallah is in the bunker. And we have the Iron Dome and we are a strong society. So this sense of strength on the one hand, although we are always the constant victim -- Israelis -- we're always the constant victim in the region. Is very tragic for those who think we need a solution in the region.

Barak has apparently persuaded a significant sector of Israelis that they're stuck with what they've got and what they've got is okay. And it sounds to me like what you're describing and what we see in the data not only this poll, Shibley, but the ones that you've produced in the past, that there is a sort of passivity, enough satisfaction with what's going on, a belief that nothing they do could make it better, so let's just stick with what we've got.

Last night we did a film screening of a new documentary about the state building project by Salam Fayyad, the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority and he spoke afterwards. He talked about the Gaza crisis as a doctrinal defeat for the path that he has represented which he described as the peaceful path to freedom for Palestinians. On the Palestinian side, there's a sense of urgency, but certainly for Salam Fayyad and the P.A., not much they can do about it. On the Israeli side, there are many actions they could take but a sense of passivity. Shibley, do you think that there's anything that could shift Israeli public opinion in the direction of a more active approach?

MR. TELHAMI: Part of it of course it's about an assessment of prospects and I always say that if you think that it is possible to make a deal, you immediately see a shift. The problem over the past decade is that we have had both on the Arab side and the Israeli side is a bet of people saying it's impossible for whatever reason. They make an assessment that it's not going to happen even they really wanted to make peace. Palestinians feel and Arabs outside feel that. What you have, it's really a betting game in some ways, so people are betting and you could see how pessimistic they are, so that shifts. If you're going to create a shift within public opinion, of course it could happen. It happens in two ways. One way is that you do have a shifting assessment for some

campaign that people can really believe in and then it rallies and shifts public opinion because it offers them some way out. People don't -- in the Arab world you have the same thing where you have people say I'm prepared for a two-state solution, two-thirds. I don't think it's going to happen, over 55 percent. And yet if it doesn't happen, I think it's going to be violence for years to come. No good. They don't have an option. They are looking for a way out, both Israelis and Arabs so you have to create something that they can believe in. Who's going to do that?

The problem is that outside whether it's going to be American mediation, can America do it, or the narrative. What happens in this thing is that when you know -- if you're a politician -- an Israeli politician or an Arab politician, if you are betting that the prospects of peace are small anyway, that then it's a zero sum game. So you want to mobilize your public behind a tough stand that you're going to take. You're help swaying them to the right. There is no way out of it. It is I think in some ways reinforced by something that Dana said that's really important about the psyche. It's not just the status quo. There is this -- part of the Israeli projection of power even as Israel says we're insecure, and Israelis are insecure. Inside they feel insecure. But there is this projection of confidence about -- the Iron Dome is an example, the projection of confidence about Israeli military superiority, Israeli advantages, Israeli -- seeing the Arab weaknesses, seeing the division. There this thing of buying into a narrative of strength that not without fear, but a narrative strength that really is very hard to break in this environment and that's why I think the pessimism is pervasive.

MS. WITTES: That's fascinating. Dana, Shibley is saying that the Israeli public is searching for someone to offer them solutions. Elections are coming up January

22. There are very strong electoral prospects on the right and the left and the center-left seem fragmented, divided. Is there a vacuum there that Israeli politicians can fill?

MS. WEISS: That is an interesting question and I think, Shibley, you touched on the point that the Israeli public is schizophrenic. It's amazing. On the one hand they are always with a constant feeling of victim. It's always we always have these -- on the news why don't you -- why don't you show how the -- the press shows how -- only the Palestinian side of the story and they don't show how the lives of more than 2 million civilians -- no one would tolerate it. You wouldn't tolerate missiles on Washington. You don't want to go through it and you wouldn't tolerate it. I have three boys and I look at them and I said why do I have to tell them about the live in Israel? But again Israelis always feel that their story isn't protracted right in the world yet they do feel superior regarding power, brain, ingenuity and whatever. The -- which is also the constant victim.

But elections are coming and it's interesting. There is an amazing Catch-22 which really I have no answer for that. It's good because I usually have to ask questions. Here is the catch. Netanyahu's ratings -- we do a monthly approval rating for Netanyahu on my show. Twice he rocketed when he freed Gila Shaleet and when -- now when he stopped the operation and he didn't conquer Gaza. So twice when Netanyahu betrayed his -- he wrote books on it. Someone said that you can -- for buying his books. This is Netanyahu's belief and he betrayed them twice and when he betrayed them twice he got the highest ratings. And then the minute after it's election time. They go back to the same right-wing rhetoric and the public wants that and they will vote that and they will go -- and they will go to the right. So that's very interesting, and I think what happened is the right called the left's bluff and said there is no one to talk to. We're getting missiles.

We withdrew out of Gaza and we got missiles. What did we get back? We -- every politician, what did we get back? We withdrew from Gaza. We didn't get nothing. Olmert offered everything to Abu Mazen, to Mahmoud Abbas and he didn't even come back, two sentences you always hear. So people they -- they say okay, left, finished. But the left didn't come up and say now what happened to your values and your beliefs? Why don't you execute them? You are the dream team right-wing government. Please annex the territories. Go ahead, please. Tell the United States we're going to do whatever we want to do. Conquer Gaza. You have the strongest government. Why aren't you doing that? Instead of calling the right-wing's bluff, what they're doing is they're disguising themselves as center. If you look at Shelly Yacimovich who is a brilliant politician, she's the leader of the Labor Party. She took a party of eight seats. Now there are 24 to 25 in the polls. It's really unbelievable what she did. She will not talk about the Palestinian issue. She will only talk about social issues and economic issues. And she's trying to get voters from the extreme right. She says it doesn't matter. We all agree. So everyone is disguising. Tzipi Livni now, I am the leader of the center. To be left in Israel is -- to a certain extent it's something you're supposed to be ashamed of. When someone wants to insult someone else they say he's a left. Instead of calling the bluff of the right, everyone -- all the leaders in that vacuum are disguised as center because they want to take the 30 percent who think status quo is okay. They want to take them to their side.

And one quick -- I think the most important that happened, again, I think if you want to process something to take into consideration, first of all, the disengagement from Gaza has left people with the understanding that if you pull back from the territories you get missiles. That's very important. They heard their leaders promise we will not

tolerate missiles -- we will not tolerate -- and then they cave. We will not tolerate missiles on Ash Kalone and then they cave. We will not tolerate missiles on Ash Dod and then they cave. We will not tolerate missiles on Tel Aviv and they cave. So people understand that if you withdraw from territories you get missiles. And even those who support negotiations do not support negotiations for the thought that they will reach peace and they will make life better in Israel. They only support negotiations because they think it's better for Israel tactically. Tzipi Livni, Ehud Olmert, all the politicians from the center-right, when they talk about the need to go into process they never say we will reach peace. No one thinks peace will be reached in the near future -- but they say it's better for Israel to negotiate because it will get legitimacy -- worldwide legitimacy to go on with its policies regarding Iran, military actions, go on regarding Hamas, military actions. So that is the biggest --

MR. TELHAMI: Peace process but not peace.

MS. WEISS: The process. What's important is the process, not the peace.

MS. WITTES: At this point I'd love to open it up for questions from the audience. We'll have a microphone coming around and let me ask you two things. First, please identify yourself, and secondly, please make sure it's --

SPEAKER: We didn't talk about Obama though.

MS. WITTES: We didn't, and I'm sure we'll get some questions about Obama from the audience.

SPEAKER: So someone ask about Obama.

MS. WITTES: Yes, please ask about Obama, and please make it a question. That's one. Let's start with Gary Mitchell.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks very much and I want to come to this point that you were just talking about which is if you withdraw from the territories you get missiles. A lot of people believe and we heard that multiple times from people on this stage that if Sharon had withdrawn from Gaza not unilaterally but arm in arm with Abu Mazen, that the lesson might have been very different, which was that the withdrawal was a result of a peaceful agreement giving Abu Mazen some credit for that. Instead, it was read as getting the hell out because we were getting beat up. It's a two-part question. One, A, that is a point of view that was expressed a lot here and by here I mean in Washington and at Brookings by various and sundry people.

MS. WITTES: I'll plead guilty. I wrote that in "The Washington Post."

MR. MITCHELL: Is that a fair assessment, number one. And number two, if that's the case; are the Israelis capable of understanding that?

MS. WEISS: That's a very good question and I think that the short answer is no, they don't think -- and frankly I'm not sure that it would have made such a big difference. But the longer answer is that you have to understand that when Sharon -- because it's not just about the disengagement. It's about the whole set of mind of Israeli leadership. When Sharon went ahead with the disengagement, at that stage he used to call Abu Mazen and Mahmoud Abbas a hen without feathers. He was perceived to be very weak. He was perceived to be a footnote in Palestinian history. Later on -- it was only later on that his head of staff Dov Weissglass found Abu Mazen to be a stronger leader that he is -- now he talks about it. Abu Mazen has changed. It's not the same Abu

Mazen then. I think Sharon thought it's better off we disengage from Gaza and leave us with the rest of the issues. It was always a tradeoff -- it's always a tradeoff. We give them that, we get that. Always tactical. Now you have to remember that the biggest mistake in Gaza was the elections that the Americans insisted on. The Bush administration insisted on elections. The Israeli administration tried hard to prevent those elections understanding that Hamas would gain power and Hamas did gain power. But I think that if I were a Palestinian living in Ramallah, I would -- as Salam Fayyad said yesterday would think that the only people who get things done in the region are the Hamas because as they always say, Israel only understands power. Now I addressed this question to -- just last week -- who is the security adviser for Netanyahu -- I said what would a Palestinian think and he said I'll tell you what. The Palestinian living in Ramallah -- it's an amazing answer. The -- you ask a Palestinian where he prefers to live. Does he prefer to live in Ramallah or does he prefer to live in Gaza? It's the same answer you get when people talk about the discrimination of Arab citizens in Israel, the right always says where could they be better off, in Syria, in Egypt? So it's -- where are they better off? But I do think -- I do think that it was a strategic set of mind not to strengthen the Palestinian Authority. And even now, the bottom-up -- the bottom-up is we'll keep it quiet.

MR. TELHAMI: Just to add to this, it's not like -- it's at the core a political dilemma. It's not like there are no Israelis who know that peace agreements are better. Look at the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. Even the Israeli public in this environment of an Islamist government -- Islamist-led government, they don't think the Israeli peace treaty will be abrogated even with tension over time. It's been since 1979. So that it's better. And a lot of Israelis understand that Gaza is not independent. The narrative --

Israel has pulled out of Gaza, therefore -- as if Gaza became independent, but theoretically and functionally Gaza is still under occupation. And as a consequence, for -- an Israeli leftist could make the argument would you --

MS. WEISS: Why are you pointing at me?

MR. TELHAMI: You're to my left you see. Could make the argument that what Israeli would be under occupation for what day. It's not just what Israeli would come under attack for what day. But to make that argument, you have to have a political purpose for it and when you don't think there's a peace process or you're not going to rally for an option, you back down particularly in terms of conflict so that's people withdraw from that argument and they leave the space for the narrative on the right and that's the one that dominates. So nobody has the clout to make that case.

MS. WEISS: The question is time -- is time on our side, on the Israeli side or on the Palestinian side? If you come from a perspective saying it's imperative we get a deal now because the windows of opportunity as President Peres is saying is closing or Livni's argument that the demographics are working against Israel, then you would say it's urgent for us to reach an agreement. I'm trying to share with you that the majority of Israel's public, they feel time is on Israel's side and that goes back to the essence of -- because time is on the side of who makes good use of it and they're making good use of -- the standard of living is rising, Israel's high-tech industry is booming, here we have the Iron Dome, the best -- yet another Israeli invention. So making -- we're making use of time. So that's a critical aspect when they think about where is it -- where are we going.

MS. WITTES: Thank you. Thank you. Good point. Let's take two or three questions from the floor and then we'll come back up for comments. On the aisle right here, the gentleman in the gray jacket.

SPEAKER: -- from the "Jerusalem Report." Shibley, did you ask the question what Israelis should think about the importance -- whether settlements are an obstacle to peace or not?

MS. WITTES: If you could pass the microphone down to the lady down the aisle with her hand up right there.

MS. UDIS: Karen Udis, legal department of the World Bank. I was the country lawyer for Jordan for 20 years and was working on water issues, and of course there's the Johnston agreement which is a 50-year-old de facto agreement. My question is two-part. The first is what do very accurate stakeholder analyses using computer game theory tell us about the conflict in the Middle East? And I'd be happy to talk to any of you after the program about that. I am guardedly optimistic because I think there is one thing on everybody's side and that's the rule of law, and the question is what is the distance -- the de facto situation now in rule of law and getting to rule of law because I think that's the only answer to the conflict.

MS. WITTES: Thank you. If you could pass the mike back to the aisle to Jose, then this young lady right here in the green sweater.

MS. KAPLAN: I'm Sally Kaplan. I'm an intern at PIPA. I was wondering given his role as mediator in the recent case-fire agreements, are Israelis expressing confidence in Morsi as a potential key player in future peace negotiations?

MS. WITTES: Thank you. A short, sharp question. If you'd pass it back to the aisle. Thank you. Nobody yet has asked about President Obama. Who has a question about President Obama? I'll ask a question about President Obama. I have to say my response to your data, Shibley, is what a fickle public. But then of course we know that America public opinion can be incredibly fickle on these popularity of positivity rating, temperature taking questions. And we've seen it too in the Arab world, their favorite world leader, what they think of the United States, going up and down.

MR. TELHAMI: Mostly down.

MS. WITTES: Mostly down. What do you think accounts for this really notable, positive shift for Obama and what room do you think it gives the United States?

MR. TELHAMI: It's interesting. There could be multiple things going on at the same time. One thing is that the Israeli public attitudes toward Obama were never as bad as they were being reported, were never as bad as the Israeli government projected. We've seen that even from day one even when people were saying -- Tom Friedman wrote right after the election that Israelis were below the margin of error or something like that. I remember something like -- that was actually not true on the public level. So he -- first of all, it wasn't always -- it was better than people had assumed. Number two, they had already improved dramatically really by 2010 and 2011 particularly after the speech he gave at the United Nations. We recorded that last year in November. Number four, they were led to believe that if Obama wins then he's going to "throw Israel under the bus." We wins and it turns out he was extremely supportive of Israel on the Gaza issue and then opposed -- remarkably opposed, I think a big mistake -- my own personal view, the Palestinian bid at the U.N. I think it's -- given where the administration

was, I think it was probably and it might be seen historically as a big mistake. But nonetheless he supported them. And so given all of that, I think you can see that people warmed up to him over time, but I'm curious to know if that's your take.

MS. WEISS: First of all, you did the poll after the -- the Gaza.

MR. TELHAMI: The Gaza war.

MS. WEISS: So that's very important. I think in popularity we are now a culture which is so used to texting who we want on a reality show and who we want -- popularity is so connected to the reality program culture, we -- so we like you this week. Next week we'll text you off the show. So that's very important I think. And Israel's society is very -- has a short memory and now they like you and the next week they won't like you. But I think the -- my -- we did polls on -- on our show and -- before the American elections and Romney was the favorite by large. He was -- people in Israel -- because were shifting right. It's interesting. The shift in the Israel society is kind of in the wrong -- a different direction from the shift in the American society so they're shifting apart I think. It's interesting. But anyway, Romney was perceived to be -- but here comes President Obama. Very smartly I think in the interests of Israel you can argue what it makes of America in the region, but here he comes and he puts aside what everyone is expecting his revenge and surprising Israel with talking to the prime minister on the phone and giving us -- Israelis were very offended when the White House released a picture when -- where President Obama was speaking to the phone with Netanyahu and putting his feet on the table. So this time -- these things matter to the public and this time they released a picture where he was taking the time in his Burma historical tour and he was sitting down and speaking, so it was very big on the news, here was President Obama

respecting Netanyahu although Netanyahu was -- you saw -- everyone understood who he favored. So the interesting point for me is if they finally take him on his word that Israel's security matters and the ties have never been stronger and whatever. Will they take his word on the fact that keeps on saying he will not tolerate a nuclear Iran that he will not -- all the options are still on the table? My assessment is that it will be harder for Netanyahu today to do anything without the support or the green light of the States because you have to remember the biggest and best pollster in Israel is Benjamin Netanyahu. He knows how to read the public. He knows -- otherwise he wouldn't have freed Gila Shaleet and he wouldn't have stopped the operation in Gaza. He's very, very strong in polling. So I think that the public now said Obama wasn't that -- he didn't throw us off the bus. Maybe he'll be right about Iran and maybe he's not -- but we're not -- we need America. We still need America. We need some more Iron Domes. So we need America so that could be an interesting point.

MS. WITTES: It does maybe give the U.S. a little more space with the Israeli public. We had questions on Morsi, on game theory and the conflict and on settlements.

MR. TELHAMI: Very quickly on -- I don't -- I have not asked in this poll about settlements, but obviously a lot of pollsters do in Israel and we have a little bit of an understanding of where Israelis are. Historically, the majority opposes settlement but that majority went down over time. I haven't looked at the most recent ones in Israel. On Morsi, we -- you could see we asked -- we didn't ask are your views positive or negative - - what I expect, they're going to be more negative for sure. That's why I used the different measure which is: is he better than you expected or worse than you expected

because we know what they expected principally.

And it looks like generally it's roughly as they expected which is they're uncomfortable with him, but it is interesting to look at the consequences because that question about the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty is in part about him which is do you think they're going to go to abrogate the treaty? You have only a small minority, like 17 or 18 percent, say they're going to abrogate the treaty. Most say that they won't. The final question on game theory, by the way, I don't know if you knew that I was actually a game theorist in an earlier life, but --

MS. WITTES: I thought that was planted question for you, actually.

MR. TELHAMI: A planted question, but I want to answer it because it's -- I'm not sure -- I'm not sure that I could tell you something in game theory that I couldn't tell you in my -- in my own words that would inform you about the dilemma that they're in.

MS. WITTES: I wanted to ask you whether -- the question about Morsi or about Egypt more broadly -- have you done similar question in past polls of Israelis? How does this it's about what we expect link up to what they actually expected in previous polls?

MR. TELHAMI: We didn't ask them about Morsi. As you know, he wasn't even -- you remember when he was elected for one thing.

MS. WITTES: He's the accidental president.

MR. TELHAMI: So we asked them obviously about what they would expect after Mubarak and overwhelming Israelis thought it was going to get worse because Mubarak was seen as Israel's ally and they knew that wasn't going to return. So the expectations were negative. How negative -- I don't think -- I certainly didn't measure

every bit of that, but clearly it's not as negative as people think when you look at the assessment of what might happen to the peace treaty.

MS. WEISS: He gained a lot of points after his role in the last events in Gaza. I think the biggest -- and you see it when people react to the Arab Spring. People in Israel were used to talking to the leaders. It was enough to cut a deal with the leaders. Now we are in a region where it is important to talk to the people. America is going to -- is understanding this, but again acting I think in the traditional manner and it's interesting to see where it will take them. But also in Israel people are understanding. That's why they want to hang onto Assad. It's amazing because there are a lot of -- even Lieberman was very clear on the fact that Israel should extend humanitarian aid and the atrocities there and we have families in the Golan Heights, the Druse who have relatives in Syria and yet the public wants to hang onto Assad because the devil you know is better than the devil you don't know.

MR. TELHAMI: By the way, that's not what it says. The poll says not that they want to hang onto Assad. They think that it will probably get worse.

MS. WEISS: That it's going to get worse. So they prefer Assad -- not Assad, but the situation, the status quo again. They prefer the status quo. It's always about what you know. But I think it -- we have come to a point where we have to talk to the people and that is a big shift and a challenge for the Israeli public and you have to remember we have a public going to the right. It's a fact. When you pressure a people, they go to the right. It's true about Gaza. When Israel pressured the people, they didn't go up into the government and say change the government, they became more --

MR. TELHAMI: What about the '73 war?

MS. WEISS: In what sense?

MR. TELHAMI: It moved toward peace.

MS. WEISS: That's right, because they felt they were defeated. And we had a leader who was Menachim Begin. They trusted -- he was a right-wing leader. They trusted him and he did the -- he did --

MS. WITTES: That's right. It was the defeat of the Labor alliance that allowed --

MS. WEISS: Exactly. They felt that the Labor betrayed them and they -- he was the right right-wing leader and they said we'll trust you. You go ahead. That was -- there was leadership. At the end of the day, Ben-Gurion always said do what the people need, not what the people want and I believe that if -- Netanyahu in the second -- I think in the second term -- I think. It's a given, but we have to say we thought -- we thought it would be boring elections, and they're very interesting so far. But anyway, if Netanyahu gets reelected, if he decides to go ahead with an agreement, we saw that the public is with him and when he betrays his values the public is with him again. So if he -- people go -- will go after him if he wants an agreement.

MR. TELHAMI: Does he?

MS. WEISS: Everyone -- when he was elected there was a debate whether President Peres would way would he be -- would he be Begin who went and did the peace treaty with Egypt or would he be Yitzhak Shamir, the right-wing leader who was dragged to Madrid and was the staunch believer of the status quo? I don't know. Frankly, I don't think anyone knows.

MS. WITTES: Time will tell. Time will tell. We started late and there are several of you who have been very patient so I'm going to try and take three last questions and then come to you for answers and closing comments. I do want to note, for those of you who are interested in Israel's view of the crisis in Syria, we've just published a brand new analysis paper by Itamar Rabinovich who is sitting in the back of the room and you can find it on the Saban Center website at Brookings.edu/saban. Jose, we'll start right here.

SPEAKER: For Dana, you mentioned that Israelis think they have time on their side and I've certainly heard the same thing from many Israelis. Given that though, given the increasing economic -- forget about the Israeli- Palestinian conflict and the Arab Spring, given the increasing economic polarization in Israel and the recent demonstrations over the past year or two and also the increasing religious polarization and ethnic polarization and the growing foreign worker underclass, do you think --

MS. WEISS: You're not going to get us unhappy. I told the Israeli public is schizophrenic.

SPEAKER: You've just answered my question. Do you think time is on Israel's side?

MS. WEISS: I always try to remind myself of -- my favorite interview -- interviewer -- interviewee is President Peres because he always got a headline and it's always interesting. It's amazing to sit in front of him because he's been everywhere and he's done everything. So he always says that pessimists and optimists die the same but live differently, and coming from a person who's 92 and is still thinking about becoming prime minister in the next election, you have to listen. So I want to be optimistic. I think

that taking demographic shifts, political shift and regional shifts and the change in America's interests -- long-term interests in the region which I think are dramatic and will unfold in this presidency but also in the next one and you see it with Asia rising and -- I'm fearful that Thomas Friedman's words that in our region the extremists go all the way and the moderates tend to go -- might be an option. And then I wake up and I look around and I say this country is a miracle in any sense and it's already been here for 100 years. I think these elections are very crucial. I think Israel has reached a two-point junction and you can either go right and execute the right and -- or you should try clearly and say we have to find a solution because demographics and because we have to -- and I fear the fact that the Israeli political system is stuck in the center trying to find the center. I don't believe in center. I believe that it's better that you have two ways of thinking and then you try and work it out. And I fear the fact that it's always a unity government, it's not an opposition -- opposition. So I think we are at a very crucial point. I did find a lot of -- I was -- I was surprised personally -- this is my personal point of view, and even a bit -- points for my optimistic side on the way this government dealt with the Gaza conflict. Here again you would have thought it would have dealt with it differently, Netanyahu proved to be very pragmatic -- pragmatic, responsible. Lieberman was pragmatic, was responsible. The previous government was the government -- Ehud Olmert who said we're going to go in and show them that we have gone crazy, and on the first day -- on the first day of Operation -- which was led by a center government, they killed 89 police officers. They bombed a -- and here -- there were casualties on the other side and most of them were terrorists or -- and -- but there were casualties, but the intention -- this was the right-wing government telling the army be very, very careful for tactical reasons, for

whatever. So there is a saying -- Ariel Sharon was famous when they asked him why did you -- this is the forefather of the settlements all of a sudden become a left-wing merits -- so he said that things you see from here you don't see from there. So at the end reality is stronger, but there is a point about time. A growing number of Israelis especially from the right wing and from the settlements believe that this Arab Spring is good in the sense that Jordan will change and the Palestinians will finally find their national aspirations in Jordan and that's why they think time again is on their side.

MR. TELHAMI: I'm going to be a little bolder on this one because I think that I don't agree that time is on Israel's side and not because of demographics. This demographic argument to me is problematic morally anyway because I think the problem of occupation is not about whether Israel or not will be comfortable. It's a different kind of issue. But I think it's more about when I look at the history Israelis are incredibly ingenious people. They're technologically more advanced than anybody else. If you look at the strategic picture, they can defeat any combination of Arab states today and the Arab world is in disarray for sure. But if you look at the incredible leveling of the field globally in the information -- the information revolution and the technological spread over time, if you look at when the Israelis came close to a defeat it wasn't when they were not powerful or when they were not ingenious. They're extremely powerful and extremely ingenious. It is when they didn't take Arabs seriously. They didn't take Arabs seriously. That happened in '73 when they didn't take the Egyptians seriously both in terms of the motivation to end occupation or that they could find a way to compensate for the inequality of power. And it happened in 2006 when Hezbollah kept raining rockets for 5 weeks, the same number on the last day as the first day, something that wasn't in Israel's

planning. And even in this one were limited, confined people under occupation of shooting rockets into Israel and not -- Israel is not able to solve it through military means. So if I look at it that way, I would say if you had to predict who's going to win the next round of fighting and the next round of fighting and the next round of fighting, yes, Israel, because you're looking at it from the point of view of balancing of power and if you're betting, that's where you'd bet. But to assume that that is a constant environment, that there aren't always surprises and to take the Arabs not seriously I think is a grave mistake -- historical mistake and I think that's the lesson that needs to be learned.

MS. WITTES: Ladies and gentlemen, this has been such a fascinating discussion. I want to ask you to join me in thanking Shibley Telhami for this wonderful poll and Dana for your comments. Thank you. And for those of you who are interested in following the beginning of the Saban Forum this evening, we'll be webcasting live an interview with Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and a speech from Secretary of State Clinton. Thank you.

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File) _____

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2012